

pulling out if this is to be the magnificent proposition that has been indicated.

The Chief Secretary: Perhaps it was the proposed limitation to four per cent.

Hon. H. SEDDON: If that is so, these people possibly adopt a different attitude from that of the Government. It looks to me as though that is a kind of warning, particularly as these men have a pretty good idea, not only of the financial side, but one of them, at any rate, is well informed on the technical side. That requires a little further explanation. The sum of £110,000 is mentioned. If a plant to deal with all the by-products is installed—and this can only be made a profitable concern by developing them—considerably more than £110,000 will need to be spent. This brings the proposition into line with other trading concerns in which the Government has invested public money. In placing these points before the House, I do not wish members to conclude that I am opposed to the idea of developing our industries. I am not opposed to the idea of providing a considerable amount of money to encourage the establishment of such industries if it can be shown that they can compete under ordinary conditions that will rule when peace returns. I direct the attention of members to the terms of the Atlantic Charter because one point dealt with plainly in that Charter is the protection of industries, and that is going to be a very important matter. It may possibly be that Australia's whole fiscal policy may have to be altered.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is inevitable.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Under such conditions the possibility of this industry continuing may be still further queried, because this State would then have to compete against old-established and well-equipped deposits of potash being worked overseas.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You are not going to vote for the Bill, are you?

Hon. H. SEDDON: I ask the Minister to answer the points I have raised. I should like the House to appoint a Select Committee to go more thoroughly into the objections I have mentioned. There is a lot of information to be gathered, and quite a lot of explanation could be given regarding the development of these deposits. I express my appreciation of the hard work that has been done by the technical people in bringing the process to the point that has been reached, but my opinion is that they

would have to go much further before they were in a position to put forward a proposition that would commend itself to the average investor. Although Governments may possibly look at these matters from an angle different from that adopted by the average investor, we should have some sense of responsibility towards the people who have to pay the piper, the people who have to find the loan money and repay it. It is from this angle I am viewing the proposition. If the passing of the agreement is covered by an assurance from the Government that before committing the State to heavy expenditure it will have further investigations made, the position might be different; but I am afraid that this is only the beginning of heavy capital expenditure, and I doubt whether the State can be recouped during the period of high prices and thus enabled to carry on under the conditions that will prevail when peace is declared.

On motion by Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.35 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 1st December, 1942.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

ELECTORAL—SWEARING-IN OF MEMBER.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the return of a writ for the vacancy in the York electorate caused by the resignation of Charles George Latham, showing that

Charles Collier Perkins has been duly elected. I am prepared to swear in the hon. member.

Mr. Perkins took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

QUESTIONS (3).

FRUIT INDUSTRY.

As to Railway Transport.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Railways: Is it proposed to take action in those districts where road transport is not available to expedite the delivery of soft fruit which will shortly be marketable and, if necessary, to revise time tables?

The MINISTER replied: Existing train services should provide expeditious transport for all soft fruit traffic offering but, if warranted, alterations and additions will be made as necessary.

COFFEE AND TEA.

As to Growing in Western Australia.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Has expert attention yet been given to the advisability or otherwise of growing coffee in the North-West and tea in the South-West of Western Australia? 2, Regarding the present scarcity of coffee, has he any information as to whether Brazil still destroys vast quantities of that commodity in the interests of sound business?

The MINISTER replied: 1, Yes. 2, No recent information.

SWINE FEVER OUTBREAK.

As to Prevention of Spread.

Mr. SEWARD (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, In view of the very serious nature of the outbreak of swine fever and in order to safeguard the pig population from the disease, will he stop all movements of pigs until the department's veterinary officers can certify that the restriction may safely be removed? 2, If not, in view of the fact that the disease is still spreading and has extended to places in widely separated parts of the State, how does he justify his refusal to take such action?

The MINISTER replied: 1 and 2, Through the courtesy of the hon. member, I received a copy of his question last even-

ing, and in the draft submitted to me the reference appeared to "safeguarding the population." I am pleased to know from the question in the form the hon. member has submitted now that he referred specifically to the pig population, because this disease, which is known in America as hog cholera, is one to which the human race is not susceptible. In the second question, the hon. member asked whether I was prepared to carry out the advice and recommendations of the Chief Veterinary Officer, to which he referred in the first question. That is, simply, the position. Not merely is it true that I have taken no action without the closest consultation with and the advice of that officer, but I am acting directly on his recommendations. In further reply to the hon. member, it is well for the House and the public to know, with the fullest force possible, that there has not been one instance in connection with the outbreak of this disease on this occasion unless the pigs affected have been fed from swill. In every case where swine fever has broken out, the pigs have been found to have been fed from swill, mostly from military camps. It is exceedingly necessary that the public shall take cognisance not merely of the notice, respecting which we held a special Executive Council meeting last week, but of any further notices that may appear to be restrictive in these times.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Pig Industry Compensation.

Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture.

2, Rural Relief Fund Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motions by Mr. Wilson, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Hon. W. D. Johnson (Guildford-Midland) on the ground of urgent private business; to the Premier (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) on the ground of urgent public business; and for the remainder of the session to Mr. Holman (Forrest) on the ground of military duties.

On motion by Mr. Doney, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Watts (Katanning) on the ground of urgent public business.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Justices Act Amendment.
- 2, Criminal Code Amendment (No. 1).

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUANCE.*Message.*

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

BILL—NATIONAL EMERGENCY (STOCKS OF GOODS.)*Message.*

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

BILL—BUSINESS NAMES.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 10th November.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [2.31]: I would have no objection to this Bill in normal times. The law regarding registration of firms requires to be brought up-to-date, and particulars to be prescribed for record at the Supreme Court for the information of the general public need to be widened. I consider, however, that this would not be an opportune time to bring such a measure into force. By the measure, it is to commence operation on a date to be fixed by proclamation. In my opinion, the Bill should be amended to provide that it shall not come into force until after the expiration of the war; or else there must be a very definite undertaking given to the House that the Bill shall not come into force until Parliament has had an opportunity to express its opinion as to whether the time is opportune for the Bill to come into force. The measure will involve all firms in a great deal of work. The present is a time when firms of almost every kind are carrying on under very great difficulties. They are very short of staff, and in numerous cases firms are finding it extremely difficult to cope with the most urgent matters. Therefore I consider it would be undesirable to cast upon them an additional burden. All firms which are now registered under the existing law are

liable to be re-registered within 12 months under this Bill, so that every firm will within 12 months need to re-register; and with regard to all firms, whether existing firm, or not, the Bill provides that they must renew their registration triennially.

In addition, all firms are required, by the measure, to exhibit on their notices the names of the individual partners. Thus it will be necessary for every firm, or almost every firm, to have its notice board re-painted when the board is one on which the names are painted; or if a firm has a brass plate, or a metal plate on which the names of the partners appear in raised letters, the plate will in many instances have to go to the brass workers or proper technical people to be altered. In all cases the names of the individual partners will have to be added. As is well known, at the present time it is very hard to get painters for the urgent work of the community, and also very hard to get work done by metal workers or brass plate manufacturers, because their ranks are greatly depleted and many of their men are engaged in war work. In many instances, too, the firm name will need to be altered. In certain cases one or more partners of a firm are out of the State, perhaps oversea, and it would be impossible to get them together. It would be difficult to consult with them about any alterations to be made in the firm name. Further, it appears to me that in the case of a tremendous number of firms, where one or more partners are oversea, it would be difficult to get the necessary form of registration signed, particularly by those partners who are on active service. By the terms of this Bill, following the provision in the existing Act, if a firm has not complied with the requirements of the legislation, and takes action to recover a debt or for any other purpose, and attention is drawn by the defendant to the fact that the Firms Act has not been complied with, it is the duty of the court to stay that action. The action cannot be brought until the requirements of the Act have been complied with. Firms which may have one or more partners oversea, and therefore find it difficult or impossible to comply with the terms of the Act, would possibly be prevented for months at a time—perhaps longer—from complying with the Act. I know the case of one firm—and there are others in the same position—of which

one of the partners is a prisoner of war in Italy. He cannot sign any form.

Mr. Cross: Has he not given somebody power of attorney?

Mr. McDONALD: Yes, but I doubt if the power of attorney would extend thus far. The difficulties may not be so great as I have stated in this sense: that possibly there may be in some cases an implied authority in the remaining partners to comply with the terms of the Act; but I am not certain on that point. Where the Act requires that registration forms shall be signed by all the partners, I am not certain how far the partners who may still be in the State would be empowered to sign the name of an absent partner. I advance these instances of possible difficulties to indicate that to bring in an Act of this description at this time is going to cause a great deal of additional work, some additional expense and also some real difficulty in the matter of compliance with its terms—not perhaps insuperable difficulties, but at any rate a few more difficulties added to the burden now being carried by the mercantile and business community and, in fact, all firms in whatever occupation they may be engaged. There are firms of farmers and of pastoralists. They have enough on their hands without having all sorts of legal obligations and technicalities to comply with. I do not oppose the Bill in the sense that its provisions are not welcome and desirable. The Minister has done well to bring the Act up-to-date and submit this Bill to Parliament, but I would like him to give consideration to the difficulties I have mentioned, which are not necessarily insuperable, but comprise something added to the burdens now being borne by the civil, business and primary production populations. I should like the Minister to give earnest consideration to the desirability of associating with the passing of this measure some arrangement by which it will not come into force until the war has ended or else under which Parliament will be given an opportunity to discuss the time when it should come into force.

MR. CROSS (Canning): During the last three or four years, more men have been taken from businesses in this State than at any other stage in our history. During the two or three years prior to the war and for the first two years of the war, there entered into Australia more evacuees from other

countries than previously came to these shores. I have noticed that there has been a concerted effort on the part of these people, who have chosen Australia as their new home, to become established in the businesses that have been compulsorily left by our own people. All around the metropolitan area one can see evidences of the advent of these people, mainly Jews, who have been kicked out of Poland and Germany and have drifted into this State. One can find this condition of affairs existing whether one travels to Nedlands, Scarborough, or anywhere else. I went into two or three shops at Scarborough on Sunday and noticed that they were all occupied by foreigners.

Mr. J. Hegney: Are there any in South Perth?

Mr. CROSS: Yes, and we have had trouble with them too! The Minister for Labour, who has charge of the administration of the Factories and Shops Act, could tell members that considerable trouble has been experienced from refugees in South Perth who are prepared to break any section of the Factories and Shops Act and any of the National Security Regulations. It is just as well that the people of this State should know the type of foreigners who are getting dug into business here. They are exempt from military service and are becoming well-established while our men are away at the war. The Leader of the National Party put up a great plea on behalf of the man who has gone away. It is to preserve that man's rights that we should pass the Bill, and make certain that these people put their names over their shops so that we may know with whom we are dealing. In Germany, long before the war, there was a special head tax to deal with this type of people, because they were not compelled to comply with the military service regulations and had special conditions and a special opportunity to dig in. I hope the Minister will not postpone the proclamation of the Bill when it becomes an Act until after the war, but will have it proclaimed quickly. We have to make certain that while our men are away these foreigners will not dig in and take their places. There is a special need for the Bill. I hope it will be carried and the Act proclaimed as soon as possible.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Justice in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Short Title:

Mr. McDONALD: This clause provides that the measure shall come into operation on a day to be fixed by proclamation. I listened to the remarks of the member for Canning. This Bill will not necessarily affect breaches of the Factories and Shops Act, although it may assist in the policing of that Act. I do not believe that offences against the Act cannot be fairly well policed under the existing law. In addition, firms which do not register are breaking the law providing for firms to be registered. The law can be enforced against the firms of whose activities the member for Canning is so suspicious. I would like to hear what the Minister thinks about the matter I have just raised. The Minister cannot place much more on the shoulders of the civil population. The people are staggering under an immense burden now, and if they have any surplus energy, they, or their employees, would do far better to employ it in the war effort than in going down to the Supreme Court and signing forms, or painting notice boards. After all we must pay some heed to the relative importance of things. Signing forms and painting notice boards are important enough in peace-time but are to-day relatively minor matters. Many of these people are literally on their last legs as far as their work is concerned. They come to me and say that they would be just as well pleased if their businesses were completely taken over, because they can no longer carry their burdens. They have no staff, and their difficulties are being continually increased by new regulations and changes almost daily. This Parliament would be doing no service to the country by placing formal technical obligations on these people. On the point of the ability of partners to comply with the Act, I find that the forms which every partner or firm has to register with the Supreme Court, either immediately or within 12 months, have to be signed by all the individuals who are partners, or by their duly constituted attorneys. Not one in ten, or to be more conservative, not one in five of the partners who have gone oversea has left an attorney. People go away and say to their partner or partners, "You can carry on."

Mr. Needham: It can still be obtained.

Mr. McDONALD: Yes, in some cases, but it is hard to do so. What sort of appreciation would a man in the Middle East or at Tripoli have of the State Parliament, for chasing him up to get his signature to a form which has no importance in the real issues involved today? I am not here to disparage the Minister's Bill and am not voting against it. I am, however, asking him whether he is prepared to take into consideration the desirability of leaving the operation of this Bill to stand over until some more convenient time. The people, mentioned by the member for Canning, who conduct businesses on not very ethical lines, are not numerous.

Mr. Cross: They are more numerous than you know.

Mr. McDONALD: If the hon. member looks at the Year Book and the statistics he will find that they are the tiniest fraction of the Australian people.

The Minister for Lands: We cannot absorb too many.

Mr. McDONALD: That is so. I would like to hear what the Minister has to say on the point I raised as to the time this Bill should come into force. Another Bill which I think is a most desirable one is the Companies Bill, but it would be nothing short of a commercial or national disaster to bring it into force straight away.

The Minister for Justice: It was not intended to do so.

Mr. McDONALD: I know the Minister most wisely decided it would be wrong at the moment to place on the people of Western Australia the conditions of the Companies Bill. While this present Bill does not impose anything like the obligations of the Companies Bill, it has the same principle applying. It is not a measure which should be placed on the civil population at a time such as the present.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This Bill will impose a slight obligation and a little more work on the people concerned. The Act is 45 years old and is hopelessly out-of-date and inadequate for the present time. There are 25,000 names on the register and two-thirds of them are defunct. That causes a lot of work and inconvenience, not only to the departmental staff, but to anybody making application to register. The amount is only 5s. Under the Bill the registration would carry on for 12 months, and then the persons concerned would register

every three years. There is not much work attached to it. I have registered my firm.

Hon. N. Keenan: Under the existing Act?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes.

Hon. N. Keenan: How long have you been registered?

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister will kindly address the Chair and pay no attention to interjections. Order! I take this opportunity to warn members of this Committee that I will not tolerate hilarity in the Chamber. When I call for order I expect to be obeyed. The Chairman is entitled to that respect and the dignity of this Chamber demands it. This is the last time I will call for order, or ask any member to obey me. Those who wish to make contributions to the discussions taking place in this Committee during this sitting will pay heed to the warning I am now extending.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There is *nothing controversial* in the Bill. The member for West Perth can leave the matter of its proclamation to the judgment of the Government, which will pay due regard to what he has said. If it is necessary for the protection and convenience of the public, and to assist the office of the Registrar, we will be justified in proclaiming the Bill. On the other hand, if it is not necessary to proclaim it till after the war, then it will not now be proclaimed. We cannot make comparisons between this Bill and the Companies Bill. Numbers of firms are being registered now, and the Registrar has to go through 25,000 names to find out whether those applicants can be registered. It is otherwise left to the applicant to do the research work which is becoming almost impossible. The defunct or extinct names on that register amount to no less than 16,000 in number. If this Bill becomes an Act that register can be dealt with. The fee is only 5s. after the first 12 months and then every three years.

Mr. SEWARD: The Minister has not convinced me of the necessity for opposing the suggestion of the member for West Perth. He appears to rely on the fact that there are 16,000 defunct names he wants to remove. Surely a new Bill is not necessary for that purpose. Who is going to proceed against the Minister for removing a defunct name from the register?

The Minister for Justice: It cannot be done under the Act.

Mr. SEWARD: Surely these names can be removed. Nobody will take action against the Minister for doing so. They could be tabulated and put on one side. The register could be cleaned up in that way. There is a lot in the contention of the member for West Perth as to the almost impossibility of getting work done at the present time. Painters are not picked up on any corner of the street. In many towns people cannot get a painter. To get a name-plate is difficult, and becoming increasingly so. The request to defer the proclamation of the Act until business people have an opportunity to comply with the conditions is reasonable.

The Minister for Justice: A matter of one hour's work.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 2 to 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Registration under repealed Act to be deemed registration under this Act:

Hon. N. KEENAN: Apparently the Act contains no special provision to clean the register of the names of defunct firms. The Act, however, contains power to make regulations, and I have little doubt that under a regulation the Minister could clean the register, after giving due notice of his intention wherever it was possible to do so. Be that as it may, this clause purports to prolong for a period of one year the registration existing under the present Act of firms that are carrying on business, but the term of one year will be wholly insufficient unless the war finishes at an earlier date than the most optimistic are prepared to imagine. I move an amendment—

That in lines 9 and 10 of Subclause (1), after the word "term" the words "of one year from the commencement of this Act and no longer" be struck out, and the words "of one year after the conclusion of the present war" inserted in lieu.

This will give firms registered under the existing Act an opportunity to carry on under that registration for a period extending to one year after the war ends. If the war continues for more than another year, the firms who are complying with the existing law should be protected. Partners of firms may be at the war and unable to sign the necessary documents. To give an illustration of the extraordinary difficulty of getting a document signed, I had to get a power of attorney under the Land Act as well as a general power of attorney in order to look after my son's affairs, and over a

period of seven months letters were sent to four different addresses without finding him. One letter had been to Syria and was returned bearing a French stamp. It had been duly censored at both ends. Further, an absent partner might be a prisoner-of-war.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The amendment will have the same effect as the proposal of the member for West Perth regarding the proclamation. If the amendment is passed, we shall not be able to clean the register.

Mr. Cross: And will let foreigners in.

Mr. Patrick: How long has the register been in bad condition?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The Act has been operating for 45 years.

Mr. Patrick: Another year or two will not matter.

Mr. McDONALD: The amendment will apply only to firms which are already registered and which will not be required to re-register within twelve months. They will be in difficulties because, on account of being existing firms, they might have one or more partners at the war. If there is a choice of two evils, why choose the greater? For 45 years the Registrar has been able to carry on.

Mr. Cross: He has been growling for 20 years.

Mr. McDONALD: He could not have growled very loudly or the Government would have taken action long ago. I am not raising any captious objection. This Bill coming at the present time is a nuisance measure.

The Minister for Justice: A very small one.

Mr. McDONALD: A firm would be prepared to pay £5 to be clear of the darned thing. For instance, I have two partners away; one is a prisoner-of-war in Italy, the other is a prisoner-of-war either in Japan or in the Malay States. Such cases may not be great in number, but there are 17,000 Australian prisoners-of-war at Singapore and among them there must be a certain number of partners. The Premier has pointed out that Anstralians are scattered all over the world—In England, America, Russia and Persia. I appeal to the Committee to support the amendment.

Mr. CROSS: I suggest the Minister might report progress with a view to hurrying down an amendment that would provide exemp-

tion for men engaged in military service outside the State, on condition that a satisfactory certificate was supplied by the military authorities. If a partner is on military service, then a sign could be exhibited on the firm's window, "John Smith absent on military service." On the other hand, if a partner should be John Smithophsky, then his name should be exhibited on the window also.

Mr. McDONALD: I commend the suggestion of the member for Canning. Our object is not to prevent the passage of the Bill. If the Minister would move that progress be reported, we could perhaps ascertain whether something cannot be done to prevent the infliction of undue hardship.

Progress reported.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Mines in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—No disability, disqualification or penalty in certain cases:

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (a) of Sub-clause (1) the words "Defence Force" be struck out and the words "Naval, Military, or Air Forces" inserted in lieu.

My reason for moving the amendment was indicated in my remarks on the second reading of the Bill. I had no certain knowledge that the words "Defence Force" included the Naval, Military and Air Forces of the Commonwealth, but I pointed out that I was reasonably assured that every member wished to extend the protection which the present law gives to officers in all ranks of the Naval, Military or Air Forces. The Minister has since been good enough to tell me that by an amendment Act passed by the Commonwealth the words "Defence Force" mean the Naval, Military and Air Forces. Up till that time the Air Force had existed under a separate statute. But there still remains a doubt, and there is no reason why it should be allowed to remain. Because a word is defined in one statute as having a specific meaning, it does not necessarily have that meaning if it is included in another statute. For instance, the word "officer" may be defined in the Road Districts Act, but it may have a totally different meaning in some

other Act. I suggest the Minister adopt one or two courses. The first is that suggested by my amendment. The second, which is perhaps the simpler, is to use the words "Naval, Military or Air Forces of the Commonwealth or the United Kingdom." That would put the matter beyond doubt.

The Minister for Mines: I have no objection. My only desire is to make the matter clear.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I am offering the Minister a choice.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of paragraph (a) after the word "Commonwealth" the words "of Australia" be inserted.

A consequential amendment will be required in paragraph (b) if this amendment is passed.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The two parts of this clause are very different in their scope and in the results that will be brought about. Having dealt with the Naval, Military and Air Forces we are now proceeding to deal with what are simply civilians. The Constitution is so designed that members of Parliament, other than those specially provided for, may not hold offices of profit under the Crown. This ensures that members of Parliament shall be wholly independent and under no obligation to the Crown, and entirely free from any influence or control from the Crown. If we adopt paragraph (b) we shall be departing from that principle. It is proposed to allow civilians who may subsequently become members of Parliament to enjoy offices of profit from the Crown notwithstanding that they may be members of the Legislature.

The Minister for Mines: This Bill is only for the duration of the war.

Hon. N. KEENAN: That is no excuse for what is an improper proceeding.

The Minister for Mines: There is another side to the argument that you have put up.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Apparently that is to be overlooked or forgiven, because it is for the duration of the war.

The Minister for Mines: I did not say that. You are very clever in making these jocular remarks.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I am not joking. The matter is a serious one.

The Minister for Mines: I do not want anything I say to be turned into a joke.

Hon. N. KEENAN: This provision will alter our Constitution. The fact that it is only for the duration of the war is of minor importance, and is no defence if it is wrong.

Mr. Patrick: Will this apply to any existing members?

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not know, but we shall be opening the door. It has been suggested that even if a member of the civilian population accepts, without asking for any reward but on a voluntary basis, an office to which payment is attached, he would come within our Constitution. That is true. I have not yet drafted an amendment to meet the case of a civilian who is prepared to accept an office and carry on the duties of that office on a purely voluntary basis, but I am prepared to do so and to give him the full protection to which he is entitled in the circumstances. I would not mind making it a permanent part of our Constitution, which always excepts Army and Naval officers.

The Minister for Mines: Why not the N.C.O. or the private?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Why not? We have included all ranks so far as we have gone. This should also apply in peace-time. We should make this a permanent feature of our Constitution so that an N.C.O. or a private may stand in the same position as an officer in matters of this kind. But that is a different matter from the civilian. If we allowed a civilian to receive a reward under the pretence that the Minister for Defence considered it advantageous to the war effort we would be scrapping our Constitution, and leaving it open for anything to happen in the way of bribery and corruption, if only for the period of the war. I am willing to insert words which will entirely protect any civilian who is doing any war work although that work has a salary attached to it, but who does that work voluntarily and without pay. Meanwhile, I move an amendment—

That paragraph (b) be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is very difficult to follow the hon. member. He talks about corruption and what will happen if the Bill is passed, and says it would be wrong to pass it. He also admits that if any member of Parliament accepted any work that was paid for by the Common-

wealth Government, but did that work in an honorary capacity, he would still be liable for all the penalties under the Constitution. If any member of either House has any special qualifications and the Commonwealth Government desires to use him, and he has to travel all over Australia, there is no reason why he should not get his travelling expenses.

Hon. N. Keenan: No one would object to that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member did object to it.

Hon. N. Keenan: I said I would draft a proper amendment.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If a member accepted any of that work he would be penalised. The member for North Perth is an officer in the Air Force. Under the Constitution as it stands at present he is receiving his Parliamentary pay, but as a specialist attached to the Air Force he is entitled to receive his salary as an officer. The member for Victoria Park is also a specialist and he is an officer. He is in the same position. On the other hand, the member for Forrest, as a private, serving in the Military Forces, is not similarly entitled under the provisions of the Constitution. If any member of this House desires to take up war work and does not rank as an officer, he can be penalised. I say quite candidly that if any member of this House has special ability that the Commonwealth Government wishes to make use of in connection with war work, that member should be entitled to receive out-of-pocket expenses or other emoluments attached to the position. As the Constitution stands, if such a member should accept a position of that sort and carry out the work in an honorary capacity, he would still be liable to the penalties set out therein.

Mr. Thorn: Even so, if he were to receive all the payments to which he would be entitled, his salary in the aggregate would not be as large as that of some of the men working at the Midland Junction Workshops.

The Minister for Works: It would not be so large.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is quite true. The former Leader of the Opposition, Hon. C. G. Latham, did a tremendous lot travelling round the country in connection with war work. Should he have been expected to pay his hotel expenses,

the cost of petrol and all the other outgoings in which he was involved?

Mr. Thorn: He could not do it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Of course not. Yet if he did all that work in an honorary capacity, he would still be liable to the penalties provided in the Constitution. Even if he accepted his out-of-pocket expenses, he would be liable to get into trouble.

Hon. N. Keenan: Who told you that?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am telling the hon. member! Perhaps he remembers when he, sitting on the Government side of the House at the time, dealt with the question then raised as to the position of a member of Parliament on the Lotteries Commission, and said "That is all right. That could not happen." It did happen, and Mr. Clydesdale suffered for it, although he did not receive 2s. for his work.

The Minister for Works: No, he did not take a penny for his work.

Hon. N. Keenan: But now that is all upset.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: But it cost a lot of money to upset it. I am not tied down to the exact wording of the Bill, but if there is any danger, and the Committee decides to delete this particular provision, we should know what is the position of members. If that is to be the position and the provision is deleted, seeing that the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe has special qualifications and ability that induced the Prime Minister to request him to proceed to the Eastern States to undertake certain war work, we would have to say to him, "It does not matter if the work you are asked to undertake is of importance to the war effort; your colleagues in the Legislative Assembly have said that you must not go to the Eastern States and receive any recompense for the work you undertake." That would mean that the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe could not do the work. I think I can say for him that he could not, on his Parliamentary salary, afford to travel round the Eastern States and pay all his expenses. Are we to penalise that hon. member because he has been invited, on account of his special qualifications, to undertake certain war work? There is no question of corruption entering into this particular matter. The member for Nedlands referred to Mr. Theodore and held him up as a good example.

Mr. Doney: A good example or a bad example?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: A good example from the hon. member's point of view, and, in fact, Mr. Theodore is a sufficiently good example of a man asked to do a big job for the Commonwealth during war-time. I appeal to members to accept the paragraph as it stands.

Mr. McDONALD: The provision will allow a member of Parliament to accept an office of profit under the Crown and to receive any pay or allowance in return. The payment should be limited to out-of-pocket expenses. As the measure stands, a member might accept an appointment under the Crown at a salary of £2,000 a year, and still be entitled to his Parliamentary salary and his seat in this Chamber.

The Minister for Mines: He might accept that appointment in an honorary capacity and still be liable to forfeit his seat.

Mr. McDONALD: Precisely. It would be most undesirable if, because of his experience and ability and the Commonwealth desired to make use of him in connection with the war effort, that opportunity should be denied. I would support any provision that would enable a private member who does war work to be paid legitimate expenses, but I am opposed to any payment beyond that. I admit it may be hard as some people may be able to receive very large salaries for services rendered during the war period, such as members of Parliament would not be in a position to accept and still retain their seats in this Chamber. But it is possible for members of Parliament to accept that situation and that deprivation in the interests of the public and as an example of sacrifice in public service.

Mr. J. H. Smith: But you would not apply that to members who join the Fighting Forces?

Mr. McDONALD: No. I place them in a position quite apart; they are men not merely doing the work but possibly offering their lives for the safety of the nation. On the other hand, if a man retains his seat in this House and discharges a civilian job, he should be paid only his out-of-pocket expenses.

The Minister for Works: Mr. Menzies received a fee of 2,000 guineas for representing the Crown in the James case.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not know about that.

Hon. N. Keenan: Was he paid by the Crown?

The Minister for Works: Yes; who else could have paid that money?

Hon. N. Keenan: As a Crown Law officer?

The Minister for Mines: He was a member of Parliament then.

The Minister for Works: He was Attorney General.

Hon. N. Keenan: That was a special payment.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not know the facts of that case, but I say without the slightest hesitation that there should be no payment to Mr. Menzies or to any other member of Parliament for services rendered while holding an office under the Crown, beyond the expenses involved during the carrying-out of the duties attached to that office. It is in the public interests that members of Parliament should be prepared at this particular time—we must bear in mind that the Bill is a war measure—to give their services in the war effort without receiving any extra remuneration. I know that is not a popular idea, because in the minds of most people this is the time when they should get as much as they can for what they do. However, this is a time when we, as members of Parliament, should be a class apart from all that. I would be reluctant to see such a provision as that under discussion become the law of the land, and an important principle thus abandoned. It would be abandoned at the worst possible time because this is a period when people should be prepared to render services without looking for extra remuneration and increased profits.

The Minister for Mines: Surely the hon. member agrees that if a member of Parliament undertook duties associated with the war effort and received no additional remuneration, he should not be penalised and most certainly he should be allowed to receive his expenses.

Mr. McDONALD: He would receive expenses, but they would not represent a profit.

Mr. Patrick: You would allow him out-of-pocket expenses.

The Minister for Works: And that term has been given a particularly wide interpretation.

Mr. McDONALD: It has been given such a wide interpretation in Commonwealth spheres that there are some very unpleasant things being said about members of the Commonwealth Parliament.

The Minister for Mines: Hear, hear!

The Minister for Works: That is so.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not wish to see members of this House placed in the same position regarding expenses as applies to members of the Commonwealth Parliament, because apparently there are those who are prepared to accept amounts as expenses even if the public may be extremely dubious as to whether they are such. We propose to go beyond that and to say that if I, for instance, happen to be a man possessing knowledge and ability that the Commonwealth wishes to make use of in connection with the war effort, I shall be in a position to say, "In addition to my £600 a year which I retain as a member of the State Parliament, I want to get something more out of the work you are asking me to do." That is what the Bill means. That is the principle that will not be understood by the people of the State, and it will not be in the interests of the country as a whole.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not suggest that the member for West Perth desires to be unfair, but he was unfair in his concluding references. If a member of this House has qualifications that the Commonwealth wishes to make use of in the war effort, he should be in a position to receive a salary if one is attached to that position but, quite apart from that, if he should accept the task allotted to him by the Commonwealth and carry out the work in an honorary capacity, he could still be penalised under the Constitution as it stands. He should be safeguarded.

Hon. N. Keenan: We are all agreed on that point.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Then we have got that far. The member for West Perth talks about out-of-pocket expenses being allowed. I hope we are not going to deal with the question of what constitutes out-of-pocket expenses. I know of one man who drew expenses amounting to £5 5s. a day, and he lived at a better class hotel than others thought was necessary. Another man was satisfied with out-of-pocket expenses representing 20s. or 25s. a day.

Mr. J. Hegney: He was satisfied with a lower standard.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It was not altogether a question of standards.

Mr. J. H. Smith: A Minister receives 25s. a day.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If Ministers go about the State on public duties, some people think they do not even pay for their own meals. I would far sooner see one thing or the other prescribed. I do not wish out-of-pocket expenses to enter into the question at all. If the Committee thinks fit, let the amount per annum be limited. Should this provision be deleted, I shall notify all members of this Parliament now doing war work to get out, because they will be in danger. Would it be justifiable to ask a private member of this Parliament to go to the Eastern States on a special war task for, say, three months without receiving any expenses whatever? Certainly there is not much profit in expenses, nor for that matter today in a member's annual salary of £600. A National Security Regulation protects Federal members in this respect, but not State members.

Mr. NORTH: I wish to draw attention to cases on the borderline between civil occupations and military positions. I have been signed up for a captain's job in the Red Cross, should the Japanese invade Australia. There may be in that position some work connected with the Military Forces, such as, for instance, interrogation of prisoners-of-war.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Bill deals not only with existing members of Parliament but also with persons who are not members of Parliament today but who may become members tomorrow or next month, and who will be in the position to enjoy this protection.

Mr. J. Hegney: While the war lasts.

Hon. N. KEENAN: And for some period after the war.

Mr. J. Hegney: For six months.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The member for Tooday interjected, "What about the Midland Junction workers who are receiving pay from the Crown and who can become members of this Chamber?" The hon member asked whether they would have to resign either from their positions under the Crown or from their positions in the Midland workshops. With the exception of members of the Fighting Forces, no person is entitled,

under our Constitution, to remain a member of this House and also a paid member of the Fighting Forces, or for that matter any kind of member of the Fighting Forces. If one occupies a position in the Fighting Forces to which a salary attaches, then, even though the holder of it does not receive the salary attached to it, he is disqualified from remaining a member of Parliament. That has been the position ever since the time of the Edwards. I do not think anyone suggests that it is right for a member of Parliament to remain a member of Parliament and at the same time receive pay from the Crown. All we have to do is to ascertain to what extent we can still retain that excellent principle during a time which calls for the services of members of Parliament in connection with the war. We are all prepared to allow such a member of Parliament every legitimate expense; and it is no use saying that such expenses have led to abuse. The amount of the expenses can easily be fixed. But the word "expenses" has, I am afraid, in recent days been used to cover salaries, has been used to cover payments which are not understood by either donor or donee to cover mere expenses. While prepared to assist the honorary war worker, I am not prepared to scrap the Constitution in order to protect that other man, and a lot like him. In the Commonwealth Parliament there is at present a wild grab to see how much members can make out of the war.

Mr. Patrick: The position has not been abused in this Parliament.

Hon. N. KEENAN: No. Unfortunately we are outside the patronage of the people who have the right to bestow. Another objection made by the Minister for Works refers to the position of members of the Lotteries Commission. If the Minister likes to refer to the debate which took place here when the original Lotteries (Control) Bill was introduced, he will see that the provision made in this Bill is hopeless. Parliament passed a special Act to indemnify Mr. Clydesdale, who was concerned; and it is known to everyone that the wording of that particular Act was challenged in our courts and finally in the High Court, which held that it was a proper protection. The question here is very simple. It is whether this provision, which enables not only any existing member of Parliament but also any future member of Parliament to accept any office of profit under the Crown without

vacating his seat or having any disability imposed on him, should be the law? On the other hand, we could provide that any member of this House who does war work may retain his seat and enjoy whatever amount is allotted to him for his services in this Chamber and also receive all expenses incurred by him in carrying out war work, which amount would be arrived at, I presume, by some proper Minister, and fixed; and not left at large as has been suggested. To that there would be no objection whatever. On the contrary, we do want to see it done. On the other hand, we object to the proposal in the Bill, which is of a most dangerous character and would vitiate the whole of our Constitution.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: The member for Tood-ay raised, in this connection, the point of workers at Midland Junction. Assume that the services of a member who has worked in a hard situation are, by the exigencies of the country, required for war work, manpower being very scarce! The member for Nedlands suggested that if such a man was a member of this House, he would not be likely to work at Midland Junction. It is quite possible that, because of the dire need for skilled mechanics, he might wish to do casual work for a period of six months during the recess but he would be debarred.

Mr. Hughes: Only if he were paid.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: That is what I am saying. I would like to know whether the member for East Perth would be prepared to work at Midland Junction as a boiler-maker—at which trade I am competent to work—and refuse remuneration on pay-day. I am not competent to serve in the Military Forces but today skilled operatives are required in the munition factories. Suppose that during the recess I went to eastern Australia to work on shipbuilding construction at Cockatoo Island where I have previously worked! If this provision were not in the measure I would be disqualified from retaining my membership in this House. Having worked hard and laboriously, why should I not be entitled to receive remuneration at the end of the week the same as other skilled workers in the industry? This measure is not to continue any longer than six months after the war. There are one or two men whose services have been co-opted by the Prime Minister. If this provision does not stand, such persons will have to withdraw from the work on which they are

engaged and to which they were summoned by the Prime Minister. The Constitution has prohibitions against such practices, but we are living in critical times such as we have never experienced before. Should this Parliament say that the services of skilled men shall not be available to the Commonwealth or to the State, as the case may be? If members worked outside in a private capacity no prohibition would apply, but if they worked at the Railway Workshops, for instance, the prohibition would apply. The clause should remain as it is.

Mr. THORN: I fail to follow the arguments of the member for Nedlands. When the Bill was last before the Committee he said he was going to prepare a suitable amendment. He has had the week-end to do so and now he is asking for further time. I agree with the Minister that there are many difficulties involved in amending this clause, and I suggest that he stick to the Bill as drafted. The member for West Perth desires that members who serve in any war capacity should receive expenses. There is definitely a danger in that regard. As the Minister has already pointed out, as much as five or six guineas might be claimed for expenses.

Mr. North: That is more than our salary!

Mr. THORN: Yes. Practically every Federal member of Parliament is at present employed on some committee, and receives expenses.

Mr. Cross: You cannot say that about our State.

Mr. THORN: No. If members of Parliament are asked by the Commonwealth Government to serve in any capacity, is it not far better that they should be nailed down to a salary and have to give full services rather than be in receipt of expenses?

Hon. N. Keenan: Do not you think they would get expenses as well as salary?

Mr. THORN: That is not what I am saying.

Mr. Hughes: They do.

Mr. THORN: If they were nailed down to a salary, that would be a protection against their drawing large amounts in expenses. They would have to serve full-time on the job they were engaged in, and not decide to meet in the morning at 10 and adjourn at 11 and draw a day's expenses, which is undoubtedly what is occurring. The member for West Perth also said that we should be an example to the public on these occa-

sions. We have always tried to be, but we do not get very much thanks from the public. Reading the criticisms of Parliament in the last few months does not make one feel that the public realises that we are trying to set an example. Parliamentary salaries in these times amount to very little when taxation is taken into account. What is the position of members who are entirely dependent upon what is left of their parliamentary salary?

Mr. J. Hegney: Nothing at all is left sometimes.

Mr. THORN: That is so. It is only a mere existence. Take the ordinary tradesmen of today who are engaged in war work! Their pay envelopes at the end of a fortnight would be far more acceptable than the pay envelopes of members of Parliament. The pay envelope of the average tradesman today is remarkable.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the member is drifting into irrelevancies.

Mr. THORN: I was trying to make a comparison, but I will not pursue that argument.

Mr. Fox: The tradesmen work very long hours for their pay.

Mr. THORN: It all depends on the trade in which they are engaged. The member for Middle Swan put up a good case. He is a tradesman. If the worst comes to the worst, and it is necessary for the Commonwealth Government to ask any member of this Chamber who is a tradesman to assist in the war effort, that member is entitled to line up for his remuneration on pay day the same as anybody else. I have no doubt as to the opinion of the public on this matter. That is not going to worry me in the slightest degree so long as we feel that our position is justified. The member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe is away on war work. I have not the slightest idea what he is doing but I take it that this Bill is to give him protection also. I am not worried about that hon. member. I know that he is an honourable man, and if he goes East to assist in the war effort, he is doing it fairly in the interests of the Commonwealth Government. I am not concerned about him except that, like the Minister, I desire to make absolutely certain that he is protected and that no charge will be levelled against him at a later date.

Mr. HUGHES: I support the member for Nedlands because, as the member for Middle

Swan has said, if a member wants to do war work he can do it without jeopardising his position. He can work in a private establishment. Why is he so anxious to get under the wing of the Government? If he wants to work there are many foundries requiring boiler-makers. He could get a job in the morning provided he can swing a hammer as efficiently as he could 20 years ago. It would be a bad thing to have a member of Parliament working in the Midland shops. We would have the Falstein case all over again. In that instance, a member of Parliament went into the Air Force, and, instead of setting an example in discipline, approached an officer to violate a disciplinary order. When the officer had the courage to stand up to him Falstein threatened him. What would be the position of a foreman at the Midland workshops called upon to castigate the member for Middle Swan for not doing sufficient work for the day? He would be in an unenviable position. He would think, "Here is an influential person and part of the Government. If I interfere with him there might be repercussions against me." For members to go into the Public Service as well as being Parliamentary representatives would have a bad effect on the Service.

The real reason why we do not allow members of Parliament to hold offices of profit under the Crown is that in the days of the Tudor kings the monarchs controlled the Parliament by distributing such offices. The House of Commons found it had no power against the Crown at all and so it set up the salutary rule, that no member of Parliament should hold a place or office of profit under the Government. We ought not to deviate from that rule. If any member wishes to take a position under the Commonwealth or State, let us have a special Bill brought down giving him exemption so that not only members, but the general public, will know what he is doing and what remuneration he will get, in the same way as we compel the director of a company, if he is personally interested in a matter, to disclose to his fellow-shareholders, before they vote, what his interest is so that they will know whether he is trying to persuade them to do something in his personal interest or in that of the company. This prohibition originated from the Imperial Parliament in the 17th century, and although England today has a war at its back door, there has been no move there as far as I know to destroy

that constitutional safeguard. What difficulty has been experienced by any member in this State? As a matter of fact, positions in the Defence Forces and in the Government administrative departments are not available to members. Those that could be taken up by members are too much sought after already by people in the Forces. There are not enough plums to go round as it is! As far as the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe is concerned, he holds some honorary appointment in connection with an aliens tribunal. He is not in any danger. It must be an office of profit. If he is not deriving a profit, he is not in danger. The member for Toodyay complains that certain people are adversely criticising this Parliament. That is so. They say that Parliament extended its life without reference to the electors. I very much doubt if we are a Parliament. I doubt if the measure purporting to prolong the life of Parliament was a valid exercise of our Parliamentary powers.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is drifting from the subject matter before the Chair.

Mr. HUGHES: Here we are making an extension of privileges to ourselves. I do not suppose a full explanation of what we are doing will be made to the public. Most people will gather that we are giving to ourselves a valuable privilege—and there is no doubt that we are. It is the privilege of getting some of the plums going about in the present administration; not that I think that some of us have any chance of getting them, but nevertheless the way has been made open. I do not agree with the member for Middle Swan that there is a shortage of manpower. If, with the idea of eliminating duplications and unnecessary and useless work, a review were made of the Fighting Forces and the various administrative bodies set up since the war the manpower problem would solve itself. One sees departments duplicated where there were already existing. State departments capable of doing the work. We see people, totally unsuited, occupying administrative positions simply because they had means of obtaining them by patronage and not ability. Through the whole ramifications of these administrative departments there have been terrific wastages of manpower. If the manpower office wants to solve the problem it could well start such an investigation and not exclude its own office. If Mr. Stifford examined his

department he might be able to effect some savings. We have not yet reached the stage where there is any need to call on members of Parliament. The grave danger is that we are striking at something that is fundamental. As the member for Nedlands said, "If you pass this you may as well destroy the Constitution." The whole basis on which Parliamentary Government rests will have been destroyed. In paragraph (a) we have gone a long way towards giving protection to members of the Fighting Forces. Another criticism of this Chamber which I find frequently levelled in the city is that when a member becomes an officer in the Fighting Forces he receives, in addition to his military pay, his full Parliamentary salary and gets leave of absence, but when a tramway man joins the A.I.F. as a private he gets leave of absence but not his tramway pay.

The Minister for Mines: The Constitution does not provide for a private.

Mr. HUGHES: We have not any members as private.

The Minister for Mines: The member for Forrest is a private in the A.I.F.

Mr. HUGHES: What I have related is the complaint being made. There should be no differentiation between public servants in the Fighting Forces. What is being done leads me to believe that the rosy new order being painted will not be too bright for the underdog. I hope we will not agree to paragraph (b). If the Commonwealth Government wants some member of Parliament it can have him without this provision. So long as he receives no remuneration his seat is quite safe. The law books are full of decisions to the effect that if there is no profit attaching to the office the member is not disqualified. A man might derive a profit from such an office without actually drawing money. It is then, of course, an office of profit, but unless there is a possibility of his receiving some profit, no disqualification attaches to it. That is what was meant, probably, by a King's Counsel when dealing with the case of a member who did not actually draw a profit.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	7
Noes	..	..	..	26
Majority against	..	..	19	

AYES.			
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver		Mr. North	
Mr. Hughes		Mr. Shearn	
Mr. Keenan		Mr. Sampson	(Teller.)
Mr. McDonald			
NOES.			
Mr. Berry		Mr. Pantou	
Mr. Boyle		Mr. Patrick	
Mr. Coverley		Mr. Perkins	
Mr. Cross		Mr. Seward	
Mr. Doney		Mr. J. H. Smith	
Mr. Fox		Mr. Thorn	
Mr. Hawke		Mr. Tonkin	
Mr. J. Hegney		Mr. Triat	
Mr. W. Hegney		Mr. Warner	
Mr. Kelly		Mr. Willmott	
Mr. Leahy		Mr. Wise	
Mr. Millington		Mr. Withers	
Mr. Nulsen		Mr. Wilson	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Title—agreed to

Bill reported with amendments and the report adopted.

BILL—FIRE BRIGADES.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th November.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [4.48]: I thank the Minister for his courtesy in affording me an opportunity to speak on the second reading, as I was not able to be in my place last week when the debate was continued. This measure is a consolidation of the existing law with some amendments. It is largely a technical Bill as to which many members, myself included, have no specialised knowledge. It affects particularly the Government, the local authorities and the insurance companies. After reading the Bill in the light of such knowledge as I possess, I think it is a worth-while amendment of the law with an exception to which I shall draw attention presently. I would have liked to ascertain the views of the local governing bodies on the terms of the Bill. I have not had an opportunity to consult them; perhaps some other member has.

Mr. Cross: They are pleased with it.

Mr. McDONALD: Should the local authorities make any representations at a later stage, I hope there will be an opportunity to place their views before the House for consideration. Subject to that, the Bill appears to be desirable and should make the law more workable.

I am not in accord with one feature of the Bill. Under the existing law as amended last year, the expenditure on fire brigades

is met, as to two-ninths by the State Treasurer, as to two-ninths by the local authorities, and as to five-ninths by the insurance companies. The responsibility of the insurance companies was extended to five-ninths by the amending Bill passed last session. I pointed out last year that this principle of requiring the local authorities or the insurance companies to contribute to the fire brigade services had been rejected in a number of other countries. In England a Royal Commission made extensive inquiries and it was decided that the cost of fire services should be borne by the Crown, as it was quite illogical to demand that any part of the cost should be met by the local authorities or insurance companies. The whole cost was deemed to be essentially a function of the Crown to be met out of Consolidated Revenue. A similar principle was adopted in South Africa and, I believe, also in Canada and the United States of America. All those countries recognise that fire brigades are a public service to be financed by the Crown, just as police and light-house services, for example, are also financed by the Crown, although their objects are to save property and protect the lives of individuals.

This Bill continues the system of contributions by the insurance companies and the local authorities in opposition to the new view taken by Great Britain and the other countries I have mentioned. I refer to the basis of contribution because, in the amending legislation of last year, we provided that the expenditure to which contributions had to be made by the insurance companies and the local authorities should not include expenditure of the brigades for the purpose of defence against war risks. The provision in the existing law relating to the estimated annual expenditure which has to be borne, in the proportions mentioned, by the Crown, the local authorities and the insurance companies, is that, for the purpose of this contribution, the term "annual estimated expenditure" shall not include any moneys expended or proposed to be expended in relation to or arising from, either directly or indirectly, war or war-like operations. The idea was that fire brigade expenditure in connection with fires brought about by enemy action was something quite outside the civil expenditure for which we normally provide, and therefore should not in any part be placed as a burden on the insurance companies or local authorities.

Mr. Cross: Do not you think the Commonwealth Government should make a contribution from the war damage fund?

Mr. McDONALD: I think the hon. member is perfectly right in that suggestion. The Bill omits the proviso. The result is that if the fire brigades organisation incurs expenditure for precautions against enemy action which may cause fire, that expenditure will be a liability, according to their proportions, against the local authorities and the insurance companies. Expenditure for the purpose of precautions against fires caused by enemy action may be very considerable. The Minister will agree, I think, that it might well be £100,000, if we take into account and charge to the fire brigade services the cost of all the materials which they have accumulated or might reasonably be expected to accumulate to meet possible damage from fire caused by enemy action. If the Bill is passed without the proviso, this very large and extraordinary expenditure will become chargeable, in the proportions mentioned, against the local authorities and the insurance companies.

The insurance companies do not insure against war damage risk. The ordinary policy issued by an insurance company does not cover damage from war causes. The insurance of that damage has been assumed by the Commonwealth Government, which has charged against all owners of property a premium to cover the estimated or possible cost of damage to buildings and properties occasioned by enemy action. So we find that the Commonwealth Government has stepped in and, in respect of any damage caused by fire brought about by enemy action, has assumed the exclusive role of insurer. That is entirely proper. If we are to be consistent in this matter, we should require the Commonwealth Government, as insurer against war damage, to contribute to the fire brigade funds according to the cost that may be incurred by the fire brigades to take precautions against war-caused damage.

Mr. Cross: And pay some of the maintenance cost, too.

Mr. McDONALD: Yes. If we accept the principles of this Bill that the greater proportion of the cost of the fire brigades services which are for protection of property should be paid by the insurer, then according to the same principle the Commonwealth Government as insurer should

meet the cost of the fire brigade services which are there to safeguard the Government from loss arising out of war-caused damage, of which the Commonwealth is the sole insurer. It would not be reasonable, to my mind, to suggest that the local authorities and the insurance companies should be called upon to bear fire brigade costs incurred for the purpose of protection against war damage, because the insurance companies and the local authorities levy no extra charges on the public or on property owners to meet those difficulties of fire brigade organisation. They levy no charges for that purpose such as the Commonwealth Government levies on property owners to provide indemnity against loss from war-caused damage. It is the Commonwealth Government that receives from property owners premiums to protect them against such damage, and therefore the Commonwealth Government should contribute to the fire brigade services for the cost of the precautions which the fire brigades may take in order to protect the Commonwealth Government from claims upon the fund which it has established. That fund, by the happy fortune which so far has attended Australia, must even now be of great dimensions.

The total income received by the Commonwealth Government from war-damage premiums must now have risen to an immense figure, and it will continue to increase year by year. I suggest to the Minister and to the House for their consideration that we should continue the principle which was established by Parliament last year, by which the fire brigade costs which are incurred by reason of precautions to prevent war damage should not be a charge on the local authorities or on the insurance companies. The House should insist upon this provision; that is to say, the cost of extra services to guard against war damage should be shouldered by the authority whose responsibility it justly is, and that is the Commonwealth Government. It should be provided for out of the premiums which that Government levies on property owners for protection against war damage. I see no reason in justice or in equity, or in principle, why this Bill should eliminate the provision in this respect that was accepted by Parliament last year and included in the legislation passed last year. When we reach the Committee stage, I propose to ask the Committee to accept an amendment which

will restore to this measure the existing condition under which the local authorities and insurance companies will not be called upon to meet the expenses of fire brigades that should be borne by the Commonwealth Government, which has collected the funds that ought to be applied to that purpose.

MR. NORTH (Claremont): I was approached by certain authorities as to this Bill, but I regret to say the information has not yet arrived, although I understand it is on the way. The point I was asked to raise was that the Bill would be unfair to small authorities, which would be levied at a higher rate than would more favourably situated authorities, such as the City of Perth and possibly the City of Fremantle. Therefore, undue hardship would be inflicted on smaller authorities, such as the Perth Road Board, although I should not speak for authorities outside my electorate. I shall quote Claremont, Cottesloe and even Subiaco.

Mr. Cross: They have not paid their fair share hitherto.

Mr. NORTH: The case, for what it is worth, has not yet arrived; but I am informed that this Bill will mean an increase of $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the pound by way of extra rates in Cottesloe alone in order to meet the additional charges, whereas the City of Perth will benefit by a reduction to the extent of thousands of pounds. That naturally requires explanation, and I take it that when we reach the Committee stage the Minister will give us reasons why this extra loading should be placed on the smaller bodies while the larger bodies have their burden lightened.

Mr. Patrick: Has it been altered from what it was last year?

Mr. NORTH: Yes. I am dealing with the arrangement made between the insurance companies and the local authorities. There has been some re-arrangement of the charges, I understand, by which the smaller authorities will be called upon to pay more. I have had complaints from various local authorities, so there must be something rankling in their minds.

The Minister for Works: Are you sure that the increase is not due to the expansion of the district?

Mr. NORTH: The districts may have expanded; nevertheless, they are entitled to

put forward their views. I trust that when the Bill reaches the Committee stage this matter will be thrashed out.

MR. SHEARN (Maylands): The member for Nedlands, when speaking to the second reading, commended the member for Canning for having given the House a good discourse on one matter at least of which he could claim special knowledge.

Hon. N. Keenan: I did not say that.

Mr. SHEARN: I think the hon. member indicated that he did see eye to eye with the member for Canning.

Hon. N. Keenan: I did not say only one matter.

Mr. SHEARN: The member for Canning gave the House much information in addition to that which was supplied by the Minister. May I be permitted to say that I find myself in the same difficulty as some other members are in, because the only information we have in regard to the Bill is what has appeared in the Press, as "Hansard" is not yet available. In my opinion, this is a wise piece of legislation. It is a revision of an Act which was passed some 25 years ago; and the great advance which has taken place, particularly in the metropolitan area, is evidence of the need for a severe overhaul of this legislation. I therefore support the Bill. The member for West Perth, like myself, is not concerned about the insurance companies, which are capable of looking after their own interests. I am, however, concerned about the local authorities which are, in the final analysis, the taxpayers of the State.

I share the opinion expressed by the member for West Perth that, as the Commonwealth Government has rightly seen fit to undertake insurance against war damage and is receiving a huge amount by way of premiums from this and other States, it is grossly unfair to suggest that the provision and maintenance of equipment and personnel in relation to war-caused damage should fall on the local authorities, especially in view of the fact that the Commonwealth Government is in the happy position of having had few, if any, claims made against its funds. In the absence of figures, I should imagine that the Bill postulates increases which will have to be borne by the local authorities, and it is with that point I am particularly concerned. I am aware that many local authorities in the metropolitan area have materially expanded in

recent years and consequently their assessment is due for some re-appraisal. That cannot be said, however, of the authority in the district I represent. The provision in the Bill with regard to hydrants is an excellent one, and I commend the Minister for it. The authority in my district has acceded to every possible request that has been made of it by the Fire Brigades Board. There, again, a difficulty arises. Local authorities have their financial troubles. I hope, with the member for West Perth, that the Minister will furnish us with good reasons for the excision of the provision that was contained in the amending Bill of last year. I trust that that provision will be inserted in this Bill. The Commonwealth should definitely be asked to shoulder the responsibility which unquestionably is its. The responsibility is certainly not one for the local authorities, the insurance companies or the State Government. With that exception, I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (in reply): I am indebted to members for the way in which they have received this measure. As was pointed out by some speakers, the Bill is a technical one and difficult to understand, especially by those who have had no experience of the Fire Brigades Act. The complaints made so far have not been serious, and I propose to say a few words in reply to those members who have indicated that they propose to move amendments when the Bill reaches the Committee stage. I hope to be able to give an even fuller explanation when we reach that stage. The member for Canning has indicated that he is not satisfied with the number of members to be appointed to the board. He said that in his opinion there ought to be another member appointed. The member for Nedlands said that he understood the Bill was the result of a conference of members of the board and the Minister. That is correct. It is only natural that the members of the Fire Brigades Board should confer with me on this measure. It is also true that I disagreed with one or two amendments which the board desired to have inserted in the Bill. I do not think I have committed a grave crime in having an opinion of my own and voicing it at the conference.

I might explain to the member for Nedlands that there were only two amendments which I refused to accept, and I propose to

explain my refusal. One was in regard to the protection clause, with which I propose to deal first. I think the member for West Perth will give me credit for being at least reasonable. I did accept that amendment, under much pressure, 12 months ago, but having had 12 months' experience of it, I was satisfied there was no necessity for retaining it any longer and so it was dropped. The clause in question was inserted in the Bill passed last year by another place. The Council insisted on its amendment; I adopted a reasonable attitude and accepted it. But as I have said, 12 months' experience of the provision has convinced me that it is unnecessary and that it will probably cause great trouble to the fire brigades. As a matter of fact, the essence of the whole business is that the boards are already opposed to the spending of money on war or warlike purposes. The board drew up an estimate for the forthcoming 12 months, which had to be approved by the Minister. The members of the board themselves are responsible for deciding what shall be spent and how the money will be allocated. There is no provision in the Act for contingencies arising out of an enemy air-raid. Annually the report of the board's activities is placed on the Table of the House, and members are able to learn for themselves how the board intends to spend its revenue and how much revenue it proposes to raise. That in itself is a protection to the board, which will not spend huge sums of money.

In the first place the board draws up its estimates, which are later submitted for Ministerial approval. The board comprises representatives of those who have to provide the finance. The Government has two representatives; the companies in the past have had two and under the Bill will have three representatives; the local governing bodies have representation, as well as the country fire brigades. I cannot imagine a board of that type indulging in unnecessary expenditure. That represents the first reason why I considered there was no necessity for this restrictive section. In the second place, the Fire Brigades Board can sue or be sued and has to submit its financial statements annually to the Auditor General for his inspection and comments. Most decidedly I refused to accept the proposal for the inclusion of a provision that would mean the board could not send the fire brigade to deal with an outbreak unless an investigation had been

carried out, and the members of the board were satisfied that the fire was not caused by anything attributable to the war. If it was felt that the cause of the outbreak had some relation to the war effort, then the board would not be allowed to send out the brigade to extinguish the flames because such work was specifically placed outside the jurisdiction of the board. The member for Nedlands said that I had not agreed to the inclusion of a desired provision in the Act. He also said that additional power was required for the Chief Officer. It is true that I disagree to the proposed clause and would not approve of its inclusion in the Act. It read—

Every person shall, before submitting plans and specifications to a local authority for permission to erect any premises within the district, produce such plans and specifications to the board for approval of the construction having regard to the protection of life and property from fire, and no such local authority shall issue a permit to erect in the absence of the approval of the board.

Provided that this section shall not apply to the erection of private dwellings and their appurtenances.

I do not know whether the member for Nedlands, were he a Minister of the Crown, would have had the courage to include such a provision in the amending legislation. I confess I have not that courage.

Hon. N. Keenan: It is the first time I have heard the clause read.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: If the member for Nedlands desires to introduce such an amendment, he can do so and members can consider it. The only other serious objection to the Bill raised by Opposition members was the point mentioned by the member for Claremont and the member for Maylands, who wanted to know what the position would be in relation to finances of local authorities. If the Bill be agreed to, local authorities will pay a flat rate based on the water rates applicable in their districts. That is fair and equitable. At present there are 21 contributing local authorities. There are three separate fire districts and the other local authorities are divided into seven different small units. There are 13 fire districts in the Perth Road Board area and they pay according to arrangements arrived at between themselves, on a population basis, or on the metropolitan area water rating basis. If local authorities cannot agree amongst themselves on the basis of payment they can appeal to

the Minister to determine the issue. As Minister in control of such matters, I do not think I could satisfy any district in those circumstances. I have had to adjudicate on two occasions and I do not think any of the boards concerned were satisfied. If the provision in the Bill is agreed to there will be no room for argument, for the basis will be clearly set out.

Mr. North: The basis will vary every few years as the rates vary.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: That matter will remain in the hands of the local authorities themselves and they will pay their appropriate proportions. I can think of no fairer or more equitable way. If there is any other point on which members require information, I shall be pleased to furnish it in Committee.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for the North-West in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Interpretation:

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I move an amendment:—

That in line 2 of the interpretation of "property," after the word "also" the word "includes" be inserted.

The amendment is necessary in order to make the definition of "property" satisfactory.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 5—Fire districts:

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (d) of the proviso to Sub-clause (1) be struck out.

The effect of paragraph (d) is to create one fire district in the metropolitan area and that district will include, in addition to the City of Perth, the areas that are set out in the Second Schedule. At present the Claremont and Cottesloe Municipal Councils and the Nedlands and Peppermint Grove Road Boards form together one fire district and by mutual arrangement contribute to the cost of fire services on a population basis. Those areas are subject to similar fire risks because most of the houses are of brick and are erected on quarter-acre blocks, so that any fire would be confined to the one dwelling except under most unusual circumstances.

In Perth where almost every property closely adjoins the next, the fire risk is much greater. Nedlands, in consequence, does not wish to be called upon to pay a rate much higher than is levied under existing conditions. Comparing the position in 1937 with that obtaining in 1941, or whenever it was the latest details were provided—the difference would be enhanced today—I find that the advantage in favour of the City of Perth could be roughly £1,360. It makes a difference of more than double the amount that had to be paid in the Nedlands Road Board area. The increase there would be from £340 to £760. On the other hand the City of Fremantle will also be the gainer. In fact in centres where business houses comprise the greater proportion of the properties, there would always be a gain whereas in centres where the buildings are mostly private residences there would be a loss. On that basis Fremantle would be the gainer by £648. The member for Claremont has not received the information that he mentioned a little while ago, and the figures I have quoted were telephoned to me.

The Minister for Works: They could not have been desperately in earnest about the matter or they would have given you written instructions in time for the debate.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The fact remains that as soon as the parties concerned learnt of the proposals embodied in the Bill and their effect, they took immediate action. At the present time the risk of fire in Nedlands is extremely limited. All the houses there are of brick or stone, and all stand on separate properties; none of them is semi-detached. The result, of course, is that the risk of fire is the smallest possible. Doubtless the same position applies in Cottesloe. It would be absurd for these communities to pay money for the protection of Perth. Under the proposals of the Bill Perth would get an advantage of £1,360. And these figures are not today's figures. They were arrived at either in 1941 or in 1939. Today's figures would be much higher, since these places have progressed in the interval. The figures would be worse for Claremont, Cottesloe, Nedlands and Peppermint Grove. Then, what is the reason for the proposal? The only reason is to give some advantage to Perth.

Mr. Cross: No.

Hon. N. KEENAN: There cannot be any other reason.

Mr. Cross: There is.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The four localities I have mentioned are absolutely satisfied with the existing position. There has not been a single outbreak of fire except such as were dealt with at once. There is also an advantage in the proposals of the Bill for the City of Fremantle, though not for North-East Fremantle. The four separate local governing bodies to which I have referred have governed their areas not only satisfactorily to themselves, but to the satisfaction of everyone who visits them.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: If this clause is defeated, the entire Bill will be useless. Mr. H. J. Simper, chairman, and Mr. F. W. Samson and Mr. F. W. Tuohy, members, of the sub-committee of the executive of the Local Government Association on fire brigade charges, in 1938 reported as follows:—

Section 42 (2): "When the municipal or road districts of several local authorities are united into one fire district, the contribution payable by such local authorities shall be apportioned between them in such proportion as may be agreed upon, or in case of disagreement as may be determined by the Minister."

We recommend that the association ask the Hon. the Minister to unite the whole of the metropolitan local authorities named in the schedule attached, into one fire district, to be known as the "Metropolitan Fire District."

The annual contribution to be proportioned to the annual value of the reticulated areas as determined by the Water Supply Department.

The committee desires to express its thanks to the president of the Fire Brigades Board and his chief officer, secretary, and also the Under Secretary of Water Supply, for the information and assistance given.

The argument of the Fire Brigades Board naturally is that the whole of the metropolitan area is in actual practice being dealt with as one fire district.

Hon. N. Keenan: There never has been a call.

Mr. Cross: There has been a call, but the hon. member interjecting does not know. In fact, there have been numerous calls from his district.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The Bill proposes the most economical method of doing what is required. There is much more in this than merely attending to fires. The whole area can be more economically worked as one district. That is a much better system in the interests of the whole metropolitan area and can be worked more economically. The Nedlands

district has been escaping with a very light payment for many years, whereas the Perth City Council has been paying an extra amount for many years. Previous to the amendment Act of 1941, the Nedlands district had been paying £629. On the proposed new contribution, the amount will be £773, or an increase of £144 per annum, which I think is not too much to ask. In order to make a success of the Bill, this clause must be retained. The Fire Brigades Board says that it is the essence of the Bill. In practice, the provision is carried out at the moment, except that some boards are evading their financial obligations.

Mr. NORTH: The grievance the smaller authorities have against the City of Perth is the allocation of fees. Under this measure, Nedlands, Claremont, Cottesloe and Peppermint Grove will have to pay amounts much in excess of those which have been paid for years past and greatly in excess of the amount to be paid by the City of Perth. No one denies that the local authorities concerned should have the fullest protection and that they should pay for it; but according to information I have received, the City of Perth and the City of Fremantle have had their contributions greatly reduced, whereas some of the smaller authorities will be forced to increase their rate by about 1d. in the pound to meet their payments, and that is a big item for a struggling local authority. I am sure that the Minister does not intend that, but that he wants to strike a fair balance. If there is to be some general overhaul in the metropolitan area in regard to water, lighting, fire protection and so on, then the districts referred to by the member for Nedlands and myself will be only too pleased to pay their shares, but at present we consider they are mulcted in many ways, and this will be an additional impost.

Mr. CROSS: The provision in this measure for a single fire district is the wisest provision in the Bill. If it is defeated, then I agree with the Minister that the Bill will be useless. The member for Nedlands admitted that he knows little about fire brigade administration. I will give an illustration showing the stupidity of the present system. Bayswater, Bassendean, and Guildford constitute three separate fire districts. Under an efficient organisation the whole of those districts could be effectively protected by one station, especi-

ally with modern transport. The three stations now have volunteer firemen, most of whom work in Perth, while others work in Fremantle and Midland Junction.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Are they members of the Fire Brigades Union?

Mr. CROSS: No, they are not eligible for membership. If a fire occurs in those districts, the Perth Road Board avails itself of the Maylands brigade or the Victoria Park brigade. The Victoria Park brigade has frequently been sent to the Canning district, as well as to Guildford, and the cost has been borne by the City of Perth. Obviously, the volunteer firemen in those districts would not be available for duty during the day. It is only commonsense that those three districts should be worked as one. Neither Peppermint Grove nor Cottesloe has a fire station.

Mr. North: Swanbourne has a station.

Mr. CROSS: Yes, a big one. It employs seven permanent men and controls a large district. In the past, the district represented by the member for Nedlands has not paid its fair share of the cost of maintenance and administration. East Fremantle and North Fremantle have been continually complaining, because they maintain the stations which serve not only their own district, but also Cottesloe, Cottesloe Beach, Mosman Park and Peppermint Grove. For years Peppermint Grove, which is one of the wealthiest road board districts in the State, has been contributing a miserable £20 a year for fire protection, whilst Fremantle has been paying a rate five times as great. This Bill seeks to introduce a single fire district. It would bring about a fair method of taxing the people to pay for the cost of fire protection. If the people of Nedlands have to pay more, it is only because they did not pay their fair share in the past. Most of the local authorities in the metropolitan district will not pay more but less because, under the new method, instead of each district striking its own rate—and the rates varied very substantially in the past—all will pay a rate levied on the same basis. The rate will be assessed on the water rate which, in turn, is assessed on the annual value. The geographical location and the value of the risk will determine the amount a district will pay, and all will pay a fair share. The owner of a wooden house on a quarter-acre block at Osborne Park or Queen's Park will

pay a rate assessed on an annual value of, say, £100. The rate on a quarter-acre block in Hay-street will be a thousand times as great because the annual value is a thousand times higher. That may be an exaggerated figure but it is not greatly exaggerated.

Mr. North: There are very few fires there.

Mr. CROSS: The hon. member does not know. The firemen are so efficient that he never hears the news of fires. I looked up the figures for Swanbourne over the last ten years. The hon. member would be astounded at the number of calls the fire brigade has received.

Mr. North: Mostly grass fires.

Mr. CROSS: And some total fires.

Mr. North: It is only practice for them.

Mr. CROSS: What would have happened if the firemen had not gone out to fight those grass fires? A few houses would have been burnt. The same applies to the district of the member for Subiaco. I would like to know what would happen in my electorate this year with grass like it is, if the firemen did not combat grass fires. To practice the whole district is worked as a single fire district. If there is a fire in Claremont and the Claremont machine is out, the machine from the next nearest station is sent and, if another machine is necessary, one is sent from Perth. On occasions one has been sent from Perth to Fremantle and has done the trip in 17 minutes.

The Minister for Mines: It must have broken the traffic regulations.

Mr. CROSS: Fire engines are not subject to the traffic regulations. They go against the traffic in Hay-street and Murray-street. They go the nearest and quickest way to a fire. In every State in the Commonwealth there is a single fire district. We are not adopting something that is out of date, we are bringing our system up to date. We have been unfair in the past to Fremantle, North Fremantle and Perth, which have paid more than they should and have maintained "machines" from which several other local authorities have received wonderful assistance and protection. I challenge the members for Nedlands and Claremont to show that this system is not fair. Naturally the cost of fire protection in South Perth and Nedlands will increase. The population in Nedlands has increased in the last 10 years by 7,000 or 8,000 people,

just as there has been an increase in South Perth. There are three times as many people in Nedlands to pay as there were 10 years ago, but they are not paying three times as much.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Yes, they are!

Mr. CROSS: No, they are not!

Hon. N. Keenan: They are paying on a population basis.

Mr. CROSS: Now they will pay on the basis of the value of the risk, which is a fair proposition. That principle has been adopted in Great Britain and in nearly every State of the Commonwealth. The local authorities asked for this.

Mr. North: Did the Association ask for it?

Mr. CROSS: Yes. To my knowledge two ballots have been taken. My district has indicated approval and I think most will do so.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I think the member for Canning is under a misapprehension as to the effect of what I have moved. The point is that the Nedlands Road Board and the Claremont and Cottesloe Municipalities object to the fact that under the terms of this Bill no decision can be revoked except by Act of Parliament. Under the Act the Governor-in-Council may revoke an order uniting different districts, if the order proves unworkable. If this Bill is passed it becomes part of the statute and the statute and the Governor-in-Council will have no power to alter the position. The figures given by the Minister are entirely at variance with the figures given to me, and whoever computed them has deceived one or the other of us.

The Minister for the North-West: I have explained that this is prior to the other amendment from three-eighths to five-ninths.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I am not bothering about that.

The Minister for the North-West: I know you are not, but I am.

Hon. N. KEENAN: He is talking about what the alteration would mean to the ratepayers of Nedlands or Claremont or Cottesloe. The figures he gave are not consonant with the ones I received. According to those I have, the Nedlands Road Board will be called upon to pay more than 100 per cent. above what it is today.

Mr. Cross: Perhaps they are guessing.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not suppose the road board clerk would send me a guess. Where does the money go?

The Minister for the North-West: To the benefit of the fire protection of Western Australia.

Hon. N. KEENAN: As a matter of fact, I am a ratepayer of Perth and so any personal view I may hold in the matter would coincide with that of the member for Canning, but I do not want to see an injustice done to those who are not inviting it at our hands by their conduct. They are carrying on with the greatest measure of success and have never made a call on the Perth Fire Brigade.

Mr. Cross: Yes, they have. The Perth Fire Brigade goes out without being called.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If the Nedlands firemen found it in their district they would turn it out as an intruder. At the moment they are satisfied with the provision to deal with any outbreak as a united body. It does not want and has never asked for help from Perth. This is not the first occasion when an attempt has been made to rush through such a provision as this. It was attempted in 1938.

Mr. Cross: Not here.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not know where else they tried. I am told that the former attempt was defeated by this Chamber because members did not see any reason to alter the law which, I repeat, empowers the Governor-in-Council to unite any two or more local governing bodies and create them one fire district. He also has power to annul that joinder. This measure seeks to make that a statutory enactment. I cannot see any reason for it.

The Minister for Works: Would you agree to its being done by regulation?

Hon. N. KEENAN: In that case at least the parties would first of all be heard. If the Minister then arrived at a certain conclusion and brought about a joinder of districts, and it was afterwards shown that it was not acting in a beneficial manner, he could undo his work. But once this Bill is passed, another Act of Parliament must be passed for that purpose. That, I think, is unjustifiable. What the Minister desires can be achieved if the parties are willing, or even against their wishes, by Order-in-Council. Why is he not content with that?

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	4
Noes	..	..	..	..	25
					—
Majority against	..	..	..	..	21
					—

AYES.

Mr. Keenan
Mr. McDonald

Mr. North
Mr. Sampson

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Boyle
Mr. Corerley
Mr. Doney
Mr. Fox
Mr. Hawke
Mr. W. Hegarty
Mr. Hill
Mr. Kelly
Mr. Leahy
Mr. Millington
Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Panton
Mr. Patrick

Mr. Perkins
Mr. Seward
Mr. Shearn
Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Triat
Mr. Warner
Mr. Willmott
Mr. Wilson
Mr. Wise
Mr. Withers
Mr. Cross

(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Constitution of board:

Mr. CROSS: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 the word "ten" be struck out with a view to inserting the word "eleven."

This is intended to authorise the election of a fireman to sit on the board as a representative of the employees. Such a liaison would obviate the difficulty that prevails in Melbourne. Since Wednesday last there has been a partial strike of firemen as a protest against certain actions of the board. All work, apart from actual attendance at fires, has been suspended by the men. This would not have occurred, in my opinion, had the men had a representative on the board. For a long time the employees in Sydney have had a representative on the board, and I have been informed that his presence has been found beneficial. No question of wages or conditions is involved in my proposal, because they are fixed by the Arbitration Court. Quite a number of amendments embodied in the Bill emanated from the firemen. Good work has been done in the city block recently by cleaning up backyards where highly inflammable boxes and rubbish were stored, which were a menace to the safety of the city. The volunteer firemen elect a representative to the board, and this system has worked satisfactorily.

Progress reported.

**BILL—LOCAL AUTHORITIES
(RESERVE FUNDS).**

Council's Amendments.

Schedule of three amendments made by the Council now considered.

In Committee

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 5, Subclause (2):—Delete the words "according as the Minister may direct" in lines 8 and 9 on page 3.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This Bill was introduced at the request of local authorities who do not object to Ministerial control.

Mr. Doney: Did they specifically ask for it?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Since the question was raised, the chairman has been interviewed and he has stated definitely that he is satisfied with the Bill. Local authorities make a practice of referring various matters to the department. They have asked for the special right to establish reserve funds with moneys already collected, and they are quite satisfied that the winding-up of the fund should be done with the authority of the Minister. The Minister will not be interfering; as a matter of fact, they consider that he will be protecting them. They desire stability and uniformity in the matter. Municipal authorities are at the point of closing the year and are not in a position to make up their estimates for the forthcoming year until they know the fate of this measure. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Mr. DONEY: The member for Kataning, speaking on the second reading, quoted two local authorities who disapproved of this reference to the Minister, and local authorities in my electorate strongly object to what they regard as the Minister's interference. No useful purpose would be served by the Minister's trying to control the situation. I repeat that this is an altogether useless and unnecessary authority for the Minister to exercise. I previously asked the hon. gentleman what purpose his intervention would serve; but, in replying, he did not give me the information I desired. It is quite proper to obtain the Minister's authority for getting money for any other purpose than that of paying it into the reserve fund. The only

other purpose would be to pay it into the current account of the local authority for ordinary purposes. What need is there for obtaining the Minister's authority to do something that must be done—put the money in its proper resting place? The Minister's proposal would involve much extra work, and at a time when the public interest demands that all such work should be minimised.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 6, Subclause (2):—Delete the words "according as the Minister may direct" in line 23, on page 3.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This amendment is similar to the previous one, and I move —

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 3. Clause 8:—Delete paragraph (b).

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Members of another place cannot have read the Bill, or they would not have moved for the deletion of this paragraph.

Mr. Doney: The Minister has no right to say that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If it is deleted, then there is no authority to withdraw any money from the funds. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Mr. DONEY: If the paragraph were excised and the question of reference to the Minister for his authority had not been raised, then by reason of that very fact the local authority would simply draw on the fund as required.

The Minister for Works: The Bill gives no authority other than this for drawing from the fund.

Mr. DONEY: In the normal course of accountancy, money would be withdrawn from the fund.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of the Minister for Works, Mr. Doney and Mr. Withers drew up reasons for not agreeing to the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

House adjourned at 6.29 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 2nd December, 1942.

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Health Act Amendment (No. 2), 2R.	1683
Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act Amendment, 1R.	1692
Motion: Railway freights and fares, as to suggested increase	1689
Resolution: State forests, to revoke dedication	1671
Adjournment, special	1692

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION—WAR RISK INSURANCE.

As to Commonwealth Charge.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH asked the Chief Secretary: Will the Government consider the advisableness of making representations to the Commonwealth Government in favour of a reduction of the rate charged for the compulsory insurance of property against war risks?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: Yes.

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY [2.20]: I move—

That for the remainder of the session, the House, unless otherwise ordered, shall meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, at 11 a.m.

In moving the motion, I do not wish it to be understood that it will be absolutely necessary for the House to sit during the hours on each of the days mentioned. If the motion is agreed to and the situation is such that it will be necessary for us to sit longer than we have been sitting, then we shall be able to do so without having to move that the Standing Orders be suspended.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West): I am not raising any objection to the motion, but I hope the Chief Secretary will cur-